United Nations A/HRC/37/NGO/25

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 February 2018

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-seventh session
26 February-23 March 2018
Agenda item 9
Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.18-01876(E)
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Islamophobia

In the confrontation between the Western world and Islam, Islamophobia is not a new phenomenon, but it has increased in intensity during recent years. Many organizations have reported an increasing frequency of hate crimes and their intensity against Muslims and Muslim organizations, following the terror attacks on the United States of America soil on September 11, 2001. They say that in addition to verbal abuse, Muslims are exposed to and suffering from physical assaults, destruction of their property and murder.

Islamophobia in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

- Muslims are introduced as a problematic community in media and statements by government and police officials. This description has created an anti-Islam atmosphere in the UK. According to various opinion polls, hostility is being shown toward Muslims in different ways and under different covers. The British police have reported a rising rate of hate crimes against Muslims after the bomb attack in the city of Manchester and the terrorist attack on the London Bridge. In Manchester and after the bomb attack at a concert on May 22, 2017, a total of 139 attacks were reported against Muslims in the week that followed the attack, showing a fivefold increase compared to a week before.[1]

Islamophobia in France

- France has the biggest Muslim population among Western countries. However, its mainstream media introduce Muslims as foreigners and the country's judicial system has never offered powerful executive guarantees to prevent Islamophobic incidents. Following terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, the country kicked off a violent anti-terror campaign, which intentionally targeted Muslims. Despite reduced rate of attacks against Muslims in France during 2016, the figures are still alarming. A report released by the Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI), noted that a total of 576 Islamophobic attacks were registered in France in 2016.[2]

Islamophobia in the United States of America

- Many opinion polls show that Islamophobia not only exists in the United States, but is on constant rise on an annual basis. Depiction of Islam and Muslims in the West as "other" stems from long-term clichés, which introduce Muslims as being violent, repressive, and bigoted. In addition, discrimination against Muslims has been intensified following 9/11 terror attacks.
- The U.S. President Donald Trump has a long history in inciting Islamophobia. Through messages that he posts on social media and also via media comments, he has clearly stirred an Islamophobic atmosphere in the United States. Islamophobic ideas of Trump have led to anti-Muslim incidents. In 2016, incidents targeting Muslims reached their highest following 9/11 terror attacks.
- The number of hate groups that specifically target Muslims in the United States increased almost three times in 2016 as Islamophobic hate crimes continued to rise in frequency. This sharp increase can be attributed to Donald Trump's campaign, whose success has strengthened far-right tendencies in the United States. As a result, the number of known anti-Islamic organizations active in the United States has increased from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016. On the other hand, the total number of hate groups in the United States increased for the second consecutive year from 892 to 917.[3]

- Only a few hours after Trump signed his executive order to suspend entry of immigrants and travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries, a mosque in Victoria, Texas, was set on fire. The latest figures released by the FBI show that hate crimes against Muslims increased by 67 percent in 2015. This was the same year that

1 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jun/20/anti-muslim-hate-surges-after-manchester-and-london-bridge-attacks. Retrieved on 15 Jan 2018

2 European Islamophobia Report 2016

3 http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-blame-islamophobic-anti-muslim-ban-hate-crime-numbers-southern-poverty-law-center-a7582846.html, retrieved on 15 Jan 2018

trump started his election campaign. Many measures taken by Trump in line with his election campaign promises were banning the entry of Muslims to the United States, which were later mixed with the public anger over such terrorist attacks as the massacre of 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and further fanned the flames of Islamophobia in the United States."

Recommendations:

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence urges the United Nations Human Rights Council to pay special attention to this issue, take necessary steps to identify its causes and consequences, and make an effort to solve this global problem.

- Arranging a meeting to be attended by officials of the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations aimed at promoting dialogue and exchange of views will be a very positive step in this regard. Such a meeting can boost mutual understanding and make these organizations even more resolute in their effort to push for domestic laws to be passed to support Muslims and criminalize measures taken against this minority.

- Introducing a mechanism to oversee measures taken by countries to eradicate Islamophobia in addition to provision of advisory services and proposals by the UN organs are among other steps that this world body can take to combat Islamophobia.

- We also urge the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to use its regional offices in order to train journalists to avoid using ethnic and religious clichés in their reports. UNESCO can also take steps in order to increase awareness among journalists and other media activists about issues that are related to Muslims and their cultural characteristics.

- Without cooperation between the United Nations and regional, national and nongovernmental organizations, it would not be possible to do away with Islamophobia and its consequences. We urge the United Nations to actively cooperate with members of the civil society for the resolution of this problem and take advantage of ideas offered by nongovernmental organizations in this regard.

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[1] Ibid.